



Spoken and written narratives

Driver Youth Trust

What's the idea?

There are strong links between language and writing, with oral language skills being a foundation element of good written language (Bishop and Snowling, 2004). Developing oral narratives can help support children's written narratives.

What does it mean?

Developing writing is a hugely complex task dependent not only on underlying language skills, but on a whole range of components linked to children's behaviour, knowledge and motivation. Knowing pupils' strengths and needs is an important starting point for supporting writing. For some pupils, a focus on spoken narratives can be a useful strategy.

Studies have shown that preschoolers' ability to retell

simple stories while viewing the pictures is a good predictor of their outcomes during the primary school years (Bishop and Edmundson, 1987; Hayward and Schneider, 2000).

Being able to tell successful narratives relies on having proficiency in a number of skills; being able to sequence events, use linguistically accurate grammatical markers, access accurate vocabulary and successfully communicate ideas. The speaker or writer has to structure the story to ensure coherence and clarity of cause-effect relationships.

Research has shown the positive impact of direct instruction for supporting planning and structure of narrative writing (Adlof et al., 2014; Gambrell and Chasen, 1991).

What are the action points for teachers?

1. The impact of story grammar instruction has been shown to improve both oral and written narrative production and the comprehension of narrative text (Gillam and Gillam, 2016).
2. It is helpful to make narrative structures explicit and give separate and explicit instruction for the components of narrative structure.
3. It is the explicit and structured nature of the instruction that is key. Adults need to model the structure for the children and make it explicit.
4. Stick visual reminders of a simple narrative structure on pupils' desks and encourage pupils to use them when retelling any events or planning writing.

THE DRIVER YOUTH TRUST IS A CHARITY COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE OUTCOMES OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO STRUGGLE WITH LITERACY.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

- » Devonshire V, Morris P and Fluck M (2012) Spelling and reading development: The effect of teaching children multiple levels of representation in their orthography. *Learning and Instruction* 25: 85–94.
- » Puttman R (2017) Using research to make informed decisions about the spelling curriculum. *Texas Journal of Literacy Education* 5(1): 24–32.
- » Sumeracki M (2018) Classroom research on retrieval practice and spelling. Available at: <http://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2018/8/16-1> (accessed 7 February 2020).